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*Politician Extraordinaire: The Tempestuous Life and Times of
Martin L. Davey* (review)

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the church distinct from the world, Lehman and Nolt have produced an insightful study that further elucidates the centrality of religion for a proper understanding of the Civil War.

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Politician Extraordinaire: The Tempestuous Life and Times of Martin L. Davey. By Frank P. Vazzano. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2008. xiv, 322 pp. Cloth \$45.00, ISBN 978-0-87338-920-4.)

With his biography of Martin Davey, Frank Vazzano sets out to tell the “good story” of a “very, very interesting man” (x). He accomplishes this goal admirably as an “unabashed story teller” and as an historian. Certainly, no one knows Davey better than the author who has written three articles about Davey’s terms as governor, all of which appeared in *Ohio History*.

An effective biography not only examines the subject’s life but also the nature of place and time and the meaning of change. As the title indicates, Vazzano understands this well. Vazzano is especially successful in describing Davey’s life and times during his formative years and early career during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Born of an immigrant father obsessed with the apparently quixotic quest for scientific tree care and raised in poverty in small town Kent, Ohio, Davey grew to manhood as a gifted salesman and businessman, community booster, and brilliant politician. Vazzano captures the transformation of Davey during changing times as he turns his father’s vision into a successful business with customers across much of the nation and helps “boost” Kent from a nineteenth-century village with dirt streets to a modern community with all the amenities of public services.

Vazzano successfully captures the emergence of modern America and the nature of local politics. Barely out of his teens, Davey is traveling to Cleveland to sell his father’s book, *The Tree Doctor*, and then New York to promote the Davey Tree Expert Company. He boldly cultivates captains of industry, wins the tree care of the Capitol grounds, and uses advertising to creatively expand the reach of the business. At the same time, Vazzano aptly shows Davey mastering local politics: the network of friendships and personal alliances, the use of patronage to reward friends and define political power, the necessity of strong organization, and the efficacy of public speaking. He was elected mayor of Kent, served well, and, as countless politicians before and after him, used that base to win higher office.

Although one of Ohio’s most successful politicians in the twentieth century who served multiple terms as mayor, in Congress, and as governor of Ohio, Davey remains elusive as a political leader. Vazzano documents Davey’s brilliance and limitations as a politician; his organizational skills, his tireless

campaigning; his use of patronage, his less than admirable attacks on opponents as well as his inclination to turn every contest personal. Still, Vazzano's explanation of Davey's allegiance to the Democrats as the party of the people is not very convincing. As a congressman, Davey served his constituents well but his red-baiting, anti-immigrant position, and effort to eliminate waste through reorganization are more personal than partisan. His two terms as governor were scandal ridden and dominated by petty political feuds, disputes with militant labor, and conflicts with the New Deal. Vazzano shows Davey as a "politician extraordinaire" dedicated to political power and not public leadership.

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Stealing Indian Women: Native Slavery in the Illinois Country. By Carl J. Ekberg. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007. 256 pp. Cloth \$38.00, ISBN 978-0-252-03208-0.)

In his fourth volume on colonial Illinois, Carl Ekberg has again demonstrated that he is the premier authority on the Illinois Country during the French and Spanish colonial era. His latest work emphasizes an aspect of life that has generally been overlooked—or which has at least gone without systematic scrutiny—by other scholars: the enslavement of Native people, especially women.

Ekberg presents this work in two parts. In Part One, he meticulously picks apart records from American, French, and Spanish archives to extract remarkable and sometimes poignant details about the institutionalization of Native slavery in French Illinois between the late seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries. From an admittedly incomplete set of records, the author fleshes out a multicultural, multilingual, multiracial, and eminently civilized community that existed deep in North America's interior "wilderness" long before the first Americans appeared on the scene. He tells readers of a period during which a French-speaking population (largely of mixed Native and French descent), loosely governed by distant Spanish authorities and surrounded by Indian nations of varying degrees of friendliness, developed a unique community of free *habitants* and *coureurs de boise*, enslaved Africans and Native people, and indentured individuals of indeterminate status.

In Part Two Ekberg narrows his focus to a single, well-documented legal case: the so-called Céladon affair. This convoluted incident produced copious records that, the author explains, "dovetail to describe in extraordinary detail a fascinating story involving Indian slavery, miscegenation, grand larceny, kidnapping, and possible murder" (xiii). Difficult to summarize, the Céladon affair provides something too often absent from works of this